

The normal pedicel measures from the base at the back $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the horn from the burr $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

In view of the absence of damage to the pedicel and the bone tissue in that region it would seem that this abnormality was present before the animal was born and that the projections on the skull near the base of the abnormal pedicel are the indications of one—if not two, additional pedicels which failed to form.

HQ. GAME DEPARTMENT,
FEDERATION OF MALAYA,
SEREMBAN,
NEGRI SEMBILAN,
MALAYA.

H. J. KITCHENER, F.Z.S.

May 25, 1955.

9. THE STATUS OF THE NILGIRI TAHR OR 'IBEX' (*HEMITRAGUS HYLOCRIUS* BLYTH)

As a result of letters appearing in the Press to the effect that Nilgiri Ibex in these hills were on the verge of extinction owing to poaching and indiscriminate shooting, it was decided to hold a census of these animals in order to ascertain the exact position. An attempt to carry this out in May 1954 had to be abandoned owing to the unusual prevalence of horse-flies which had driven most of the Ibex into the *sholas* during the daytime, and to the persistent rain and low-lying cloud. The census was therefore deferred till April 1955, by which time the young grass on burnt areas would bring the Ibex up from the cliffs, and it was hoped that other conditions would prove more favourable. The result was most satisfactory.

Along the great 20-mile sweep of the cliffs from Nilgiri Peak to Sispara and Ankinmalai no less than 296 Ibex were counted in 17 different herds, while an outlying herd of 42 was enumerated in the Billithadahalla area. The grand total actually seen was therefore 338, and this takes no account of others which may have been overlooked or were out of sight down the cliffs. The figure given may be accepted as accurate, since great care was taken to ensure that no herd was counted twice over. This was not difficult as the lure of the fresh grass kept the animals located. The result of this census shows how far from the truth is the idea that Ibex on the Nilgiris are on the verge of extinction.

Only in the small isolated Glenmorgan area on the northern side not a single animal could be found, nor any droppings, and it would appear that this herd, which in 1947 numbered some 30 head, has been wiped out by poachers, in spite of the fact that the area has been closed to Ibex shooting for some 20 years. Elsewhere, on the main Ibex grounds between Nilgiri Peak and Bangi Tappal, poaching is mostly confined to gangs of Estate workers armed with spears and accompanied by packs of dogs. It will be appreciated how difficult it is for an unarmed Watcher or Forest Guard to deal with these, though the presence of sportsmen does act as some deterrent. Licence

holders on an average account for only two Ibex per annum, and those are 'Saddle-backs', i.e., old males, of doubtful utility for breeding purposes.

It would be interesting to know how Ibex are faring in other hill ranges of the South—the Anaimalais, Palnis, High Range, etc. Perhaps our members could give information.

KALHATTI,
NILGIRIS,
June 14, 1955.

E. G. PHYTHIAN-ADAMS, *Lieut.-Col.*,
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10. THE FAMILY LIFE OF A FIVE-STRIPED SQUIRREL— (*FUNAMBULUS PENNANTI* WR.)

In 1953 October I found a young squirrel by the wayside which had dropped from her nest. The crow and the kite had missed her. I reared her on warm milk which she sucked from a piece of cotton dipped in it, and then gradually as she grew up she fended for herself but still insisted on a daily ration of delicacies such as top of the milk, coffee and sweets. I have watched her make a dash for a resting honey-bee or a fly and devour it with relish, wings and all.

By June 1954 she was full grown and had a wooden box lined with cottonwool in which she slept at night. This box of hers was kept in a small almirah built in the wall. To come out in the open she had to jump on to the frigidaire, then on to a curtain, rope-dance along a wire to another almirah, and finally come down by the wire-meshed door on to the courtyard. There was an easier route along the casing but it never seemed to appeal to her.

On June 8, 1954 while I was immersed in a book, my pet squirrel came into the room and sat on the top of the door. The next moment she gave one of the sweetest calls I have ever heard, followed by a second and a third call, at short intervals. There was an answering call at a distance, not as musical though certainly appealing. The calls became more frequent and more in number as they came nearer, and it seemed to me they were far too many to belong to one since there was such a wide range and variety in pitch. Bewildered, I peeped out from behind the curtains on to the courtyard, and imagine my surprise when I saw trooping down the stairs of our double storeyed house, not one, not two, but as many as eight squirrels of different shapes and sizes. One was certainly old and tottering, another with just half a tail, and a third sleek and debonair. For the first time I realized that the female of the species takes the initiative to let the squirrel world know that she is ready. But one factor, I am certain she had not bargained for, was the terrific onslaught that followed, because the next moment she was hotly pursued up the casing, down the curtain and behind the couch. The suitors fought among themselves for supremacy, but for her there was a constant urgent appeal in the voice as each pursued her. Finally at an opportune moment the debonair suitor, handsomest of the lot, softening her by his coaxing call, quickly caught her in a